

Sociology Before Sociology at Otago University

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Abstract

A sociology minor appeared at Otago University in 2003 and a major in 2005, but these relatively late developments were preceded by a rich history of sociology-like research and teaching at our institution. This article presents a sociological prehistory which winds its way through aspects of the teaching and research of home science, preventive medicine, education, physical education, anthropology and several other disciplines, uncovering sociology-like approaches adopted in the university from the 1920s on. It then briefly considers the reasons behind the late establishment of a stand-alone sociology programme at the university.

A department's development

The Department of Sociology, Gender and Social Work came into being at the University of Otago in 2011. Nationally, this was the last-established unit with 'sociology' starring in a title role – ironically, at a time when many of New Zealand's existing sociology departments were being subsumed within larger schools.

Otago's Sociology Programme took its first steps in 2002 in the Department of Anthropology (later renamed Anthropology, Gender and Sociology). The first SOCI-coded courses were taught by Lesley Procter and Hugh Campbell, and a minor was offered in 2003. In 2005 Martin Tolich was appointed, and the fledgling programme had the capacity to offer a sociology major. This included two first year papers (an introduction to sociology and micro sociology), two second year papers (classical theory and research methods), and third year papers in advanced research methods and postmodernism. Brian Roper, a sociologically-trained staff member in the Department of Politics, taught the Marxist component of the second year theory paper.

Student numbers grew exponentially. Between 2005 and 2006, the combined student enrolment in the two first year sociology papers, Sociology of New Zealand Society (SOC1 101) and Cultural and Social Identities (SOC1 102), rose 77%, from 192 to 341 students. By 2010 the numbers reached 300 students in 101 and 200 students in 102. On the back of the students' interest in sociology, a number of staff appointments were made: Bryndl Hohmann-Marriott in 2007, Melanie Beres in 2010, Hugh Campbell (as Professor and Head of Department) in 2011, Katharine Legun in 2013 and Marcelle Dawson in 2014.. While Head of Programme between 2005 and 2011, Tolich was candid when interviewing new staff members: they were entering the sociology programme at the ground level, and they had the opportunity to create something original and innovative. The expansion of staff numbers has allowed the programme to offer a wide selection of classes.

As new as it was, the Sociology Programme sat in a complex institutional context, one with a long and intriguing history. New recruits were also told that there were more sociologists employed elsewhere in the university than in the sociology programme itself, the result of both the late development of the programme and a long history of social research at Otago. The focus of this historical review is less on the development of an academic programme of sociology, and more on the long history of the discipline of sociology: its precursors and the accompanying strands of teaching and research, the latter by both staff and students.

Of sociology's antecedents and fellow travellers there are many, each of which we consider in the discussion that follows: Home Science, University Extension, Anthropology, Preventive (later Preventive and Social) Medicine, Physical Education, Management, Education, History and Women's (later Gender) Studies. This was (and still is) a fluid field indeed, with movements across international and national borders and between disciplines and departments. Staff, ideas and influences flowed across all of these boundaries, from the early decades of the twentieth century to the current time. Although Otago did not have a formal Sociology Programme until recently, the university boasts an extraordinarily rich history of social analysis and teaching about society. We conclude this article with a discussion of the reasons for the Sociology Programme's long time coming, early attempts to formalise such an initiative, and the legacy of this particular history.

Home Science: the roots of social science at Otago

The School of Home Science is the oldest piece in the pre-sociology jigsaw, established in 1911 when Lieutenant-Colonel John Studholme endowed a chair of domestic science to the university. ‘To my mind’, he wrote, ‘women’s education will never be placed on a proper footing in this country so long as that knowledge which enables a woman to be an efficient wife and mother, and to make the very best out of her home surroundings, is made to take a lower position in our University to nearly all other and less essential subjects’ (cited in Strong, 1936: 4). To this end, many of the initial study topics were concerned with nutrition: the levels of calcium, iodine and vitamins in food; analysis of meat and milk (Strong, 1936: 22-23). Social issues were never far from the surface. Ann Strong, foundation professor of ‘household arts’ who took up her position in 1921, had an interest in preventing ‘juvenile delinquency’ – a concern of many, as we will discuss in more detail – through improved nutrition (Taylor, 2012).

By 1930, a few home science students began to graduate with a specialisation in ‘economics and social science’, although the precise content of this specialisation remains unclear (School of Home Science, 1963: 53-54). By the 1940s, however, some students were engaging with topics familiar to sociologists. A few student essays from the period survive, winners of the Colonel J Cowie Nichols Prize. These mentioned planned communities, social amenities in cities, community centres and organised leisure (e.g. Deaker, 1949; Matheson, 1949). June Matheson’s piece, for instance, suggested that ‘great industrialists can go beyond their commercial interests, and by entering the field of sociology, help their workers and others living on their estates to live fuller and more satisfying lives’ (Matheson, 1949: 7). Meanwhile, June Connor’s essay on housing and the New Zealand family began with a functionalist argument about the social importance of nuclear families and went on to discuss household divisions of labour, house design and the benefits of urban planning (Connor, 1945). Connor’s second essay, on the ‘population problem’, was mostly a demographic discussion that addressed the theories of Thomas Malthus, provided statistics on fertility rates, and came out in support of birth control (Connor, 1946).

There were some significant interdisciplinary links here. The interest in community planning represented the concerns of a wider New Zealand social science scene during the post-war years, a period of rapid urbanisation (see

Brickell, 2007). The home science students also cited Crawford and Gwen Somerset for their well-known adult education work at 'Littledene' (the mid-Canterbury town of Oxford) during the 1930s (Somerset, 1938). Crawford Somerset had, in turn, carried out work on child nutrition, much like Strong and her colleagues at Otago (Somerset, 1941). He reported 'results from a systematic investigation of the height and weight of boys entering Oxford High School between 1934 and 1938' (Carter, 2004: 210). Ian Carter, a former sociology professor at Auckland University, suggests that over time dietetics – especially the work carried out at Otago – would evolve into the sociology of food (Carter, 2004: 209).

Carter (2004) points out that none of the Otago home scientists had a formal sociology training. Nevertheless, their contributions constitute an important part of the field out of which New Zealand sociology emerged. What is more, the home scientists – Matheson among them – appear to have been the first local users of the terms 'sociology' and 'sociologist'. By the late 1940s the School of Home Science was graduating women who became 'rural sociologists' and often found employment in the government's Department of Agriculture. The 1956 Home Science prospectus listed the annual salary for a rural sociologist as £570-£900 (School of Home Science, 1956: 22). In the Department of Agriculture's *New Zealand Journal of Agriculture*, the rural sociologists addressed such topics as nutrition, childhood development, scientific housework and savvy consumer practices (Johnson, 1949; McNab, 1949; Topping, 1949). There was a Somerset echo here too: these journal's columns were very similar to the domestic sections of *Littledene* in which the Somersets explored matters of education, nutrition and household organisation (Somerset, 1938).

Two senior University of Otago Home Science staff, Elizabeth Gregory and Barbara Calvert, had other social science connections. During the late 1930s Gregory sat on the committee of the first Labour government's Bureau of Social Science Research, a short-lived organisation with an interest in work, income, leisure, nutrition and standards of living (Carter, 2004; Robb, 1987). In 1941 Gregory became Home Science's Head of School and was a supporter of sociologically-inclined research. Barbara Calvert's 1944 Master of Home Science thesis was a treatise on the vitamin C content of tomatoes and tamarillos (then known as tree tomatoes) (Calvert, 1944), but her later work had

a strong component of educational sociology. We will return to both women in our subsequent discussion.

University Extension: community social science

The ‘rural sociologist’ was not the only job mentioned in the School of Home Science student prospectus: ‘home science extension’ offered another career pathway (School of Home Science, 1956: 3). Otago University had a vigorous extension programme in which lecturers took education to the towns and villages of Otago and Southland and offered distance teaching to those even further afield.

In this context, sociology made an appearance during the 1950s and 60s. In 1959, Judith King published a working paper titled ‘A sociological survey of the homemaker in a New Zealand community’ (King, 1959). The town’s name was carefully omitted from the written report, but its identifying details – a centre of 10,000 people in a farming district, with limeworks nearby – reveal it was almost certainly Oamaru. Under the supervision of Elizabeth Gregory, King visited 100 households and interviewed women about their access to household technologies, their interest in ‘scientific housework’ and attitudes to adult education. The report drew upon research methods texts and the primer *Sociology: A Study of Society and Culture* (Young, 1942), and a graph showed married women’s labour force participation (King, 1959: 2). King concluded that ‘there would appear to be a vast field for helping homemakers to carry out their tasks more effectively and to gain more personal satisfaction from what they undertake’ (p. 17). These kinds of studies continued over time. The 1967 University Extension annual report mentioned that ‘work continues to be done in a variety of fields and at different levels, with growing interest in the social implications of work with home makers’ (University Extension, 1967: 3).

While Oamaru was the setting for this early piece of ‘sociological’ research, the tiny Central Otago town of Ophir hosted Otago’s earliest sociology course. In 1967, eight local women and two men enrolled in the eight lecture course ‘Introduction to Sociology’ (University Extension, 1967: 8). This was the initiative of Pieter de Bres, an ethnologist with an MA from Auckland University, who had recently joined Otago University Extension as a ‘lecturer in Maori Language and Sociology’ (*Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 1970). As it turns out, Otago University’s first introductory sociology course was not taught on the Dunedin campus! However, this out-of-town initiative was cut short

when De Bres took up a lectureship in Otago's Anthropology Department the following year.

Social work also took shape inside the Extension department, with the arrival of Pat Shannon in 1976. Shannon had an MA in sociology and a social work qualification from Auckland University. His new certificate programme was designed for social work practitioners who had no qualification. Barbara Calvert, formerly of the School of Home Science and by then a professor in education, was a key force behind the social work course, and Home Science became home to a new degree programme in community and family studies (Shannon, 2013). Nancy Carr, who had taught community development in Home Science, supported Shannon in this new endeavour. The first year of study consisted of an applied social studies programme – 'New Zealand society and that sort of stuff', in Shannon's words – followed by specific social work training. Shannon was especially interested in 'an applied form of sociology': action research, process research, social capital and a focus on non-governmental organisations (Shannon, 2013).

Even though University Extension was abolished as part of university restructuring during the mid-1990s, it had proved something of a seedbed for new social science initiatives including sociology.

Sociology in disguise? Anthropology

Anthropology's history at University of Otago is almost as long as that of Home Science. In 1919 Henry Devenish ('H.D.') Skinner was appointed to the dual position of assistant curator and lecturer in ethnology at both Otago Museum and Otago University. Skinner specialised in the material culture of Maori and Pacific peoples, and by 1952, when he retired, his sole course (taken as a 'unit' in the nine-unit BA) included a 'sociological' element: 'the comparative study of social phenomena with special reference to social organisation, government and law' (Freeman, 1959: 20). This sociology unit sat alongside zoological, archaeological and ethnological concerns. Skinner's successor, Peter Gathercole, was an archaeologist with an interest in Marxist theory, and he occasionally taught some sociology, including a module on Ronald Frankenberg's 1966 study *Communities in Britain* (Frazer, 2013).

The full Department of Anthropology grew during the early 1960s. The first dedicated social anthropologist, John Harré, arrived in 1966, to be joined by Pieter de Bres two years later. Both were heavily influenced by sociological

thought; in one book review, de Bres criticised an author for his insufficiently sociological approach (De Bres, 1966). Ian Frazer was an Honours student in 1966 under Harré, went overseas, and returned to teach in the Anthropology Department during the 1980s. At the time, the sociological influence on anthropology continued. Frazer recalls that a new professor, Peter Wilson, was an ‘eclectic, all round intellectual’ with sociological as well as ethnographic and evolutionary sympathies (Frazer, 2013). A great deal of material on Marx and Weber was offered in anthropology courses alongside Ray Pahl on work – although Pahl was, in Frazer’s words, ‘a bit outrageous for anthro’ (Frazer, 2013). ‘Anthropology at home’, that is the study of New Zealand society, was a major focus. ‘We taught ‘more sociology than anthropology at third year level’, Frazer remembers, nobody was ‘hung up in a disciplinary fashion’. There was ‘a lot of freedom and flexibility of topic and approach in anthropology’ (Frazer, 2013).

This academic fluidity was reflected in graduate work too, completed in the decades before a sociology programme was established. In 1986, Pat Shannon submitted a PhD on the political economy of the Accident Compensation Corporation under Peter Wilson, and other theses focussed on political economy, labour markets and work (Higgins, 1993; Lovelock, 1993). Kirsten Lovelock’s PhD, for instance, was an exploration of work, gender and class consciousness in the Southland town of Maitai. As the 1980s and 1990s wore on, the Anthropology Department would be a key site for sociological work, and the department provided the initial home for the Sociology Programme in 2002.

Ethnographic hints: Preventive Medicine

The University of Otago’s health science departments offer a sometimes surprising contribution to the history of sociology at Otago. Their research is not always sociological in origin or intent, but social issues have lain at the heart of a great many research projects since the 1920s.

Between 1926 and 1977, preventive medicine students completed numerous dissertations. These were an initiative of public health professor Charles Hercus. Often working in pairs, students carried out most of their research over the summer break at the end of their fourth year of study (Brunton, 2011: 75). Many dissertation topics were epidemiological, but more than a few included social dimensions. In 1928, for instance, two students conducted an

industrial survey of Hudson's chocolate factory in Dunedin, and examined aspects of the production process, health and safety management, and gendered divisions of labour within the plant (Orchard and Porterfield, 1928). During the 1930s and '40s, surveys of towns and housing as well as industries were popular – across the country, not just in Otago – with public health aspects forming a particular focus. Other students completed 'social surveys' of student flats and halls of residence.

Research responded to social change. 'Juvenile delinquency' became a concern during World War II, when the milk bar was a locus for concern. One dissertation, from 1949, offered brief discussions of several thirteen-year-old 'delinquents'. Many of these young people, the researcher contended, had a penchant for both theft and loitering in the milk bars. The writer sought out the common causes of such 'delinquency': 'feeble-mindedness', familial 'immorality' and a range of 'moral defects' (Cupit, 1949). Another pair of medical students examined the working conditions and social worlds of young factory women, seeking to understand their world rather than offering the kinds of pathologising analysis that influenced many student studies (Maxwell and Gilling, 1942; see the extensive discussion in Brickell, 2013).

Taken collectively, the preventive medicine dissertations are a rich source of material on early social conditions in New Zealand, and a few – including Maxwell and Gilling's factory women dissertation – offer early ethnographic content and used interview methods. The dissertation topics are themselves of historical interest, and track the changing social concerns of twentieth-century New Zealand. During the 1960s and '70s, by which time 'juvenile delinquency' was less of a concern, student researchers turned their attention to other aspects of modernity: 'unmarried mothers', 'drug abuse', slimming clubs, marriage guidance and tattoos. One 1969 dissertation, Bruce Kinloch's 'Safety, sex and the single girl' was a play on the title of Helen Gurley Brown's 1962 best-seller (Kinloch, 1969).

The term 'sociology' made its first appearance in a preventive medicine dissertation title in 1958 – 'Juvenile delinquency from a sociological viewpoint' (Eade, 1958) – a year before King published her research project on housework in Oamaru. Other studies went on to adopt the sociological label: an exploration of the 'sociological pressures' on homosexual men (Twemlow, 1965), a 'sociological study of children with defective hearing' (Bell, 1966), and dissertations on the 'sociological aspects' of infertility and diabetes (Carter,

1974; Young, 1975). It is unclear whether any Preventive Medicine staff had sociological expertise; it appears as though students chose their topics and charted their own pathway.

Unsurprisingly, sociological ideas seeped through into other parts of the health science curriculum. Charlotte Paul completed the Diploma of Public Health in 1976, and she recalls her cohort was taught some ‘more or less straight sociology’. Their diet included sociology textbooks and C. Wright Mills’s *The Sociological Imagination* (Paul, 2013). As a staff member, Paul later researched the impacts of class, inequality and the ‘cycle of poverty’ on health (Paul, 1985).

Exercising the sociological imagination: Physical Education

Otago’s School of Physical Education has its origins in 1947. It was established with the support of Charles Hercus, the public health professor. Philip Smithells, the first Director, arrived in 1948 with a background in English and economics from Cambridge University. The sociology of sport was not yet a specific focus in the new Otago School, but Smithells was sympathetic towards sociologically-inclined work. His own publications included a pamphlet on ‘physique and temperament’ and a book addressing the philosophies of physical education (Smithells, 1949; 1974). In 1975 Peter McIntosh, a classicist by training, arrived from the UK as Dean. He had published a book titled *Sport in Society* (McIntosh, 1963), and proved to be a ‘guiding light’ in the development of sociology in the Otago department (Thomson, 2013).

In 1976, the year after his own arrival, McIntosh made the first sociology of sport appointment: Rex Thomson, an Otago student during the 1960s, returned after postgraduate study abroad (Thomson, 2013). That year, Thomson began teaching a course titled ‘Sociology of Physical Education and Sport’. Its first section dealt with sociological modes of enquiry before moving on to the intersection of sport and class, ideology, politics, subcultures, education and the family. Course readings drew widely on literature in the sociology of sport and leisure, and their authors are still well-known: Becker, Lipset, Mills, Veblen and Berger. Thomson’s 1980 course book included readings on the institutionalisation of games and a (not uncontroversial) piece from David Ausubel’s book *The Fern and the Tiki*. Students were invited to discuss Ausubel’s assertion that rugby ‘has achieved the status of a national cult, and is invested with an importance and significance that transcend by far its intrinsic

physical, social, emotional and character-building values' (cited in Thomson, 1980).

The library in the School of Physical Education contains several shelves of bound 'special studies', year-long research dissertations conducted by physical education students from 1950 until the 1980s. These have been indexed (Thomson, 1981) and address all manner of social issues, including sport and leisure, child welfare, health camps, youth clubs, the impact of television, and the social context of exercise. Titles include 'The Maori at University' (Berghan, 1959) and 'Improving the Life Style of the Suburban Housewife' (Ragoon, 1974). As a topic, 'juvenile delinquency' was a perennial favourite. Like the preventive medicine dissertations, most of the special studies are descriptive with little, if any, critical analysis, even though their writers tackle issues that would be of interest to sociologists. There are a few exceptions to this pattern: sociological work on class makes an appearance in a project on the family backgrounds of attendees at the YMCA and YWCA, for instance (Hughes, 1972). A particularly interesting project, from 1958, is evocatively titled 'The Big Muscle Boys: A Study of Physical Culture'. Its author asked teenage boys and girls what they thought about male body shape, and he revealed that the 1950s ideal was rather slimmer than the idealised gym bodies of the following century (Smith, 1958).

From the 1980s onwards, an increasing number of dissertations and theses explored questions of sport and gender, most engaging with feminist theory as well as sociological methods and analysis (e.g. Burrows, 1986; Chisholm, 1995). Women's involvement in sport was of increasing interest in both the news media and academia. Another round of appointments saw the hiring of new several staff – Steve Jackson, Lisette Burrows and Doug Booth – with interests in the sociology and history of sport (Jackson, 2013). These staff – and the sociological strands – continue in the School of Physical Education today.

Learning about society: Education

Otago University's School of Education is an important part of the sociology jigsaw. Peter Rich arrived in the early 1970s to take up a lectureship. Rich had an MA in Education from Victoria University where he had been an undergraduate student of Crawford Somerset. He remembers Otago's Department of Education at that time as 'multi-faceted'. Staff lectured in the

philosophy, history and sociology of education, and Rich described himself as a ‘jack of all trades’ (Rich, 2013). Home Science graduate Barbara Calvert was Head of Department between 1976 and 1983 (Fitzgerald and Collins, 2011). In 1975, Calvert published *The Role of the Pupil*, with its roots in educational sociology, and her other research explored health education and adolescents’ perceptions of parenthood. Another staff member, Joseph Mercurio, had conducted research in 1969 as a Fulbright-Hayes Fellow under the supervision of Canterbury University’s Education Department, on caning at Christchurch Boys’ High School. Mercurio focused on the meanings of caning for boys, teachers and parents. His study teased out the complexities of adolescent male masculinity, employing a symbolic interactionist frame of reference (Mercurio, 1972; 1974).

While on the staff at Otago University, Mercurio supervised the early stages of Graeme Christie’s PhD thesis on the ‘V8 boys’, a Dunedin gang of youths who had spent time in prison or the borstal system. This was a study of masculinity, group cohesion, conflict and the search for excitement. Christie was interested in the V8 boys’ self-perception: a key research question was ‘what does it feel like to be a V8 boy?’ (Christie, 1979: 6). Using a symbolic interactionist focus on meaning, Christie also drew upon the work of Cohen, Merton, Durkheim and Lemert. He made first contact at meetings of the Wakari Youth Club, where the V8 boys spent time ‘shouting obscenities, pushing one another off chairs and sneaking out to their cars to drink beer’ (p. 5), before surreptitiously watching them in their ‘naturalistic habitat’ – Dunedin’s Octagon:

I pressed back further into a small recess by the Octagon picture theatre, sat down on the marble steps and started to eat the pottle of chips I had bought from “Big Daddy’s”. I wasn’t hungry but I hoped that by eating chips I could not be accused of being idle, or worse still, staring at V8 boys. I took a piece of card and a small pencil out of my pocket and began to record some notes as unobtrusively as possible (Christie, 1979, 8).

Eventually Christie and his subjects got to know one another and bonded over beer drinking and their shared interest in cars. In the concluding sections of the thesis, Christie suggested this was the ‘first study by an investigator who has made first-hand contact with gang members in their natural setting’ (p. 303). In a later journal article and an interview, Christie explored the anxieties and dilemmas of conducting his research. As an ‘honorary V8 boy’ he witnessed violent behaviour even though he refused to take part. He took ten months to

establish a relationship of trust with the young men, did not tell them they were participants in a study until quite late in the piece, and he constantly worried about being undercover. However, he later noted, some of the men read the completed thesis and enjoyed it (Christie, 1990; 2013). Between 1980 and 1996 Christie taught in the School of Education. Key themes in his lectures included adolescence, deviance, ethics, suicide and methodology (Christie, 2013).

Other pieces of the jigsaw: Management, Women's Studies, History

In 1986, Malcolm Lewis arrived from Australia and took up a position in the Management Department at the University of Otago. He had earlier completed an MA in sociology from Victoria University, having studied with Jim Robb during the 1970s, and graduated with a PhD on post-industrial society from the University of Cape Town. Lewis's Otago teaching portfolio included a course in organisation theory, and he felt this required a background in the sociology of organization (Lewis, 2013). The paper was popular with students. Although early course outlines signalled coverage of 'behavioural science' and the 'operation of individual organisations', by the mid-1990s the outlines made mention of material from sociology, anthropology, psychology and economics – and students were exposed to post-structuralist perspectives. By 1998, the course (then titled 'Organisation, Strategy and Society') had become explicitly sociological, offering Marxist, Weberian and Durkheimian theory, material on social control, work, post-industrial economies, power and the social construction of reality. Lewis also recalls teaching feminist theories, while his colleague Ralph Stablein was an enthusiast of Marx and Habermas (Lewis, 2014b).

Lewis sneaked sociological concepts into the MBA, encouraging students to move beyond 'taking the world for granted':

I was particularly interested in getting business students (especially MBA students) to realise they could not understand the decisions they made without knowing something about the assumptions on which they were based. These I took to be predicated on the dominant functionalist paradigm, where a realist ontology, a positivist epistemology and so on, made certain decision outcomes inevitable. Once the point was accepted (and it was) it was possible to introduce other perspectives (Lewis, 2014a).

The Women's Studies Programme and its emphasis on feminist theory was another part of the pre-sociology puzzle. Anna Smith took up the first

lectureship in 1990, after a search sought out an appointee with ‘a sociological or philosophical training in feminist theory’ (Harris, 1989). Women’s Studies was primarily a humanities rather than a social science programme (it was initially administered within the English Department), but students could choose from a wide range of supplementary papers in a variety of disciplines. By the time the Sociology Programme began in 2002, Gender and Women’s Studies lectures included sections on work, media, masculinity and sexuality as well as a core feminist theory course. This interdisciplinary mix drew from work in cultural studies, sociology, history and political science. Renamed ‘Gender Studies’ in 2007, this programme is now located alongside sociology in the Department of Sociology, Gender and Social Work.

History and sociology have not had an especially strong relationship at Otago, but two staff – Erik Olssen and Hew McLeod – drew upon sociological approaches. Olssen completed a sociology minor in the US and went on to a history PhD. He was interested in the urban studies legacy of the Chicago School – ‘Park, Wirth and the rest’ – and would later bring an interest in urban forces, work and social mobility to Otago, founding the Caversham study of working class southern Dunedin (Olssen, 2014). Hew McLeod, a specialist in Sikh society in his own research explored questions of social structure, kinship and gender (McLeod, 1997). Both Olssen and McLeod taught sociological material – a module on class, gender and ethnicity, and other content on Marx, methods and poststructuralism – in two core papers that were compulsory for History Honours students. Giddens, Mills, Parsons, R.W. Connell and other social theorists filled out the reading lists.

Conclusion: Sociology as sociology

There is no doubt that society was widely studied at Otago University in the decades before the establishment of the Sociology Programme in 2002. From Home Science to Education, Anthropology and other disciplines, Otago scholars engaged with a wide range of social issues. They contributed valuable work to the body of social – and more specifically sociological – research in New Zealand from the 1920s on. Some of these staff were sociologically trained and appointed into a related department; others, like Barbara Calvert, shifted in a more sociological direction as time went on. The students’ work was also notable. Their projects in Preventive Medicine, Education and Physical Education are important pieces of research in their own right, and offer

significant contributions to the history of sociology. Gender was a pivotal consideration, from the rationale behind the early establishment of Home Science to the focus on women's sport in Physical Education and projects on women's and men's health. This was a fluid field with boundaries that shifted between disciplines and across time and place. As early as the 1940s, a few Otago scholars even used the terms 'sociology' and 'sociological'.

By the 1980s, a few interested staff spent time together and agitated for the establishment of a sociology programme. Among their number were Calvert, Pat Shannon, Rex Thomson, Charlotte Paul, Graeme Christie, Peter Rich, Malcolm Lewis, Hew McLeod and religious studies scholar Albert Moore. Intriguingly, none of the participants remembers particular details of what the group discussed, or how it operated internally. Still, on one level this kind of caucusing met with a degree of success. Staff with similar interests worked together and sometimes taught in one another's courses. Peter Rich, a staff member in Education, gave guest lectures to Pat Shannon's social work students, while Rex Thomson lectured Rich's classes on research methods (Rich, 2013). There was interdepartmental supervision, too. During the mid-1970s, for instance, Rich co-supervised, with Ron Lister in the Geography Department, a sociologically-oriented PhD thesis on social change in a Quebec fishing community (Rimmer, 1978).

In other ways, the goal – a named sociology programme – proved elusive. Shannon remembers: 'every time we tried to get it on the agenda we were unsuccessful' (Shannon, 2013). There appears to be no single reason for this difficulty, but the surviving staff have offered several explanations (listed here in no particular order):

- Many of Otago's senior management were graduates of Oxford and Cambridge Universities, where sociology faced a similar struggle to be accepted as a legitimate and worthwhile discipline. These senior staff bought their views with them to Otago;
- Sociology was regarded as 'too radical'; some even held the discipline responsible for the 1968 uprisings in Europe. Shannon suggested that Robert Irvine, Otago University Vice-Chancellor for some years, had been at Essex when the students rioted there, and Irvine vigorously opposed the establishment of sociology here during the 1980s (Shannon, 2013). One Otago VC was reputed to have said 'we have no student riots because we have no sociology' (Thomson, 2013);

- Some felt the dispersal of social science perspectives throughout the university meant there was no need for a stand-alone sociology programme;
- Established departments worried that sociology would take students, and therefore income, away from their own subjects. Some described sociology as a ‘take off subject’ (Rich, 2013);
- Key staff in the Medical School were especially unsympathetic to the development of sociology;
- One prominent explanation was an informal arrangement between Canterbury and Otago Universities whereby Canterbury would teach sociology and Otago anthropology.

Whatever the reason (or the interlocking mesh of reasons), the supporters gave up during the 1980s and ‘got on with life’ while maintaining contact with one another (Rich, 2013). Sociology was clearly a presence at the University of Otago before the formation of the Sociology Programme.

By 2002 the opposition to sociology’s establishment had died down. The spectre of the ‘radical’ years of sociology and social unrest had long since faded, many of the older staff from Oxford and Cambridge had retired, and Canterbury began teaching anthropology in the late 1990s (in the face of some opposition from Otago). There was another important element too: a university restructure had created a new School of Social Science as an additional layer between the department structures and the larger Humanities Division (elsewhere typically referred to as the ‘faculty’ level of administration). The addition of sociology to such a school seemed an obvious step, and student surveys strongly supported its introduction (Frazer, 2013). Geoff Kearsley, the Dean of School, had taught sociological material in a leisure studies course in the Geography Department, and was well-disposed toward the discipline. In addition, the Anthropology Department had a sympathetic Head of Department in Ian Frazer who, as we have mentioned, had long seen the value in sociological approaches. By this time the Anthropology Department was home to the Gender and Women’s Studies programme, and was a logical seed-bed for sociology too. Staff in other departments who had misgivings about a sociology programme did not actively marshal opposition to it.

As a named programme with dedicated staff, sociology’s time had come. Since 2002, two strands have run in parallel: the staff, teaching and research of the named Sociology Programme, and the legacy of earlier times. There are still many sociologists employed outside of the programme, both within the wider Department of Sociology, Gender and Social Work – including this article’s

lead author – and in the broader university setting. Among the non-departmental sociologists are Pauline Norris in the School of Pharmacy, Brian Roper in Political Studies, Robin Gauld in Preventive and Social Medicine, Bronwyn Boon in Management Studies, Steve Jackson in Physical Education and until recently David Craig in the School of Medicine. Sociological theories and methods influence the research and teaching of many in education, anthropology, management and media studies. In many ways, Otago's long history of sociology continues today.

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